

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of providing telephone response unit (TRU)-based services, comprising:
 - receiving from a point-of-sale (POS) device a request at a host computer system to activate TRU-based services, wherein the request comprises an identifier that indicates the specific TRU-based services to be activated;
 - confirming the availability of the specific TRU-based services to be activated;
 - storing at the host computer system information that indicates the services are activated; ~~and~~
 - returning a message to the POS that indicates that the TRU-based services have been activated;
 - receiving a request at the host computer system from a TRU relating to the specific TRU-based services to provide an activation status of the specific TRU-based services;
 - searching stored information at the host computer system for the activation status of the specific TRU-based services;
 - returning information that indicates the activation status of the specific TRU-based services; and
 - maintaining a record at the host computer system reflective of an account balance of a customer relating to the specific TRU-based services.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the TRU-based services comprise Interactive Voice Response (IVR) services.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the TRU-based services comprise automated response unit (ARU) services.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein returning a message to the POS that indicates that the TRU-based services have been activated occurs in real time with respect to receiving the request from the POS.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein real time comprises within about 5 seconds.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier that indicates the specific TRU-based services to be activated is unique, as to the TRU-based services, to a particular customer.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein returning a message to the POS device that indicates that the TRU-based services have been activated comprises returning an identifier that is unique to a particular customer.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the request from the POS device to activate TRU-based services further comprises payment information relating to the TRU-based services.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier that indicates the specific TRU-based services to be activated comprises a SKU# that relates generally to the TRU-based services to be activated.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the TRU-based services are selected from the group consisting of voice messaging, horoscopes, wagering, general advice, correspondence classes, and books on tape via cell phone.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of activating telephone response unit (TRU)-based services, comprising:

entering information into a point-of-sale (POS) device, wherein the information comprises an identifier of TRU-based services to be activated, and wherein the TRU-based services comprise prerecorded information;

transmitting from the POS device a message to a host computer system, wherein the message comprises a request to activate the TRU-based services;

receiving a message from the host computer system that the TRU-based services are active; and

maintaining a record at the host computer system reflective of an account balance of a customer relating to the TRU-based services.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein receiving a message from the host computer system that the TRU-based services are active occurs in real time with respect to transmitting from the POS device the message to the host computer system.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein entering information into the POS comprises using a reader associated with the POS to read information from a TRU-based services access card.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the card comprises a selection from the group consisting of a card with a magnetic stripe, a radio frequency identification card, a smart card, a stored value card, a smart chip card, and a bar-coded card.

17. (Original) A method of providing telephone response unit (TRU)-based services, comprising:

at a TRU, receiving a request from a customer to access TRU-based services;

transmitting from the TRU to a host computer system a request to provide an activation status of TRU-based services relating to the customer;

receiving a response from the host computer system; and

using the response to determine whether to allow the customer to access the TRU-based services.

18. (Original) A method of providing interactive voice response (IVR) services, comprising:

- receiving an IVR access number from an IVR access card via a reader associated with a point-of-sale (POS) device;
- sending the IVR access number to a host computer system for validation;
- at the host computer system, validating the IVR access number by:
 - searching for an activation status of the IVR access number; and
 - in real time, activating the IVR access number by storing information that indicates that the number is active;
- receiving at the host computer system from an IVR system a request to confirm the activation status of the IVR access number;
- searching for stored information relating to the activation status of the access number;
- returning from the host computer system to the IVR system information that relates to the activation status of the IVR access number; and
- maintaining an account balance relating to the IVR services.

19. (Original) A system for providing telephone response unit (TRU)-based services, comprising:

- a point-of-sale (POS) device configured to receive a TRU-based services access number and transmit a request to activate the TRU-based services access number to a host computer system; and
- the host computer system, wherein the host computer system is programmed to:
 - validate the TRU-based services access number by:
 - searching for an activation status of the TRU-based services access number; and
 - activating the TRU-based services access number by storing information that indicates that the number is active;

receive from a TRU a request to confirm the activation status of the TRU-based services access number;
search for stored information relating to the activation status of the access number;
return to the TRU information that relates to the activation status of the TRU-based services access number; and
maintain a record reflective of an account balance of the customer.